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SUBJECT: OSCE/PERMANENT COUNCIL: RESPONSE TO REPORT BY HOM  
KOSOVO, AMBASSADOR WERNER ALMHOFER

11. Post is authorized to present the following statement at  
the February 5, 2009 Permanent Council meeting in Vienna.

Begin text:

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

The United States joins other delegations in welcoming the  
Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Werner  
Almhofer.

As your comprehensive report shows, major transitions are  
still underway in Kosovo. These transitions present  
challenges for the international community and demand that  
our respective roles continue to adapt and evolve.

The successful and peaceful deployment of EULEX throughout  
Kosovo is a significant achievement that could not have been  
possible without the constructive participation of all  
stakeholders.

The recent transition from the Kosovo Protection Corps to the  
Kosovo Security Force (KSF) has been largely trouble-free,  
and is another step in the right direction.

The engagement of the Serbian community in Kosovo's politics  
and municipal administrations is a critical element for the  
development of a prosperous, multi-ethnic, democratic state  
that also simply makes life better for Kosovo Serbs by  
improving local governance and services. We hope Belgrade  
will work in good faith to encourage and foster practical  
cooperation with the Kosovo authorities and the international  
community and to support pragmatic solutions on topics  
including public services, property claims, and protection of  
cultural and religious heritage.

The United States continues to believe that OMiK serves vital  
functions in Kosovo; at the same time, we have some concerns  
about possible duplicative activities of the international  
organizations in Kosovo, and believe that OMiK could be  
reduced without compromising its mission. Now is a good time  
to look at things from a fresh perspective to ensure that the  
Mission's activities are complementary with those of other  
organizations and are focused in areas where the OSCE has  
proven competency. We would welcome your views on areas  
where you think OMiK's activities could be streamlined or  
improved.

As your report notes, 54 UN member states have now recognized  
Kosovo, including a majority of OSCE participating States,  
and the European Commission has pledged significant resources  
to help strengthen institutions and improve social and  
economic development. The development of a multi-ethnic  
democracy in Kosovo which protects minority rights and  
religious freedom, and which has government institutions that  
can deliver stability and prosperity for its people, is a  
goal that we should all support. The United States will  
continue to strongly support and assist Kosovo. Continued  
international engagement in Kosovo will help facilitate its  
integration into European and regional institutions, such as

the OSCE. This will help secure the future for Kosovo and its citizens and will also contribute to stability for its neighbors in Europe and the wider OSCE region.

The United States is eager to work constructively with all participating States to identify ways this organization can continue to contribute to Kosovo,s stability and the welfare and security of its people.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

End text.

CLINTON